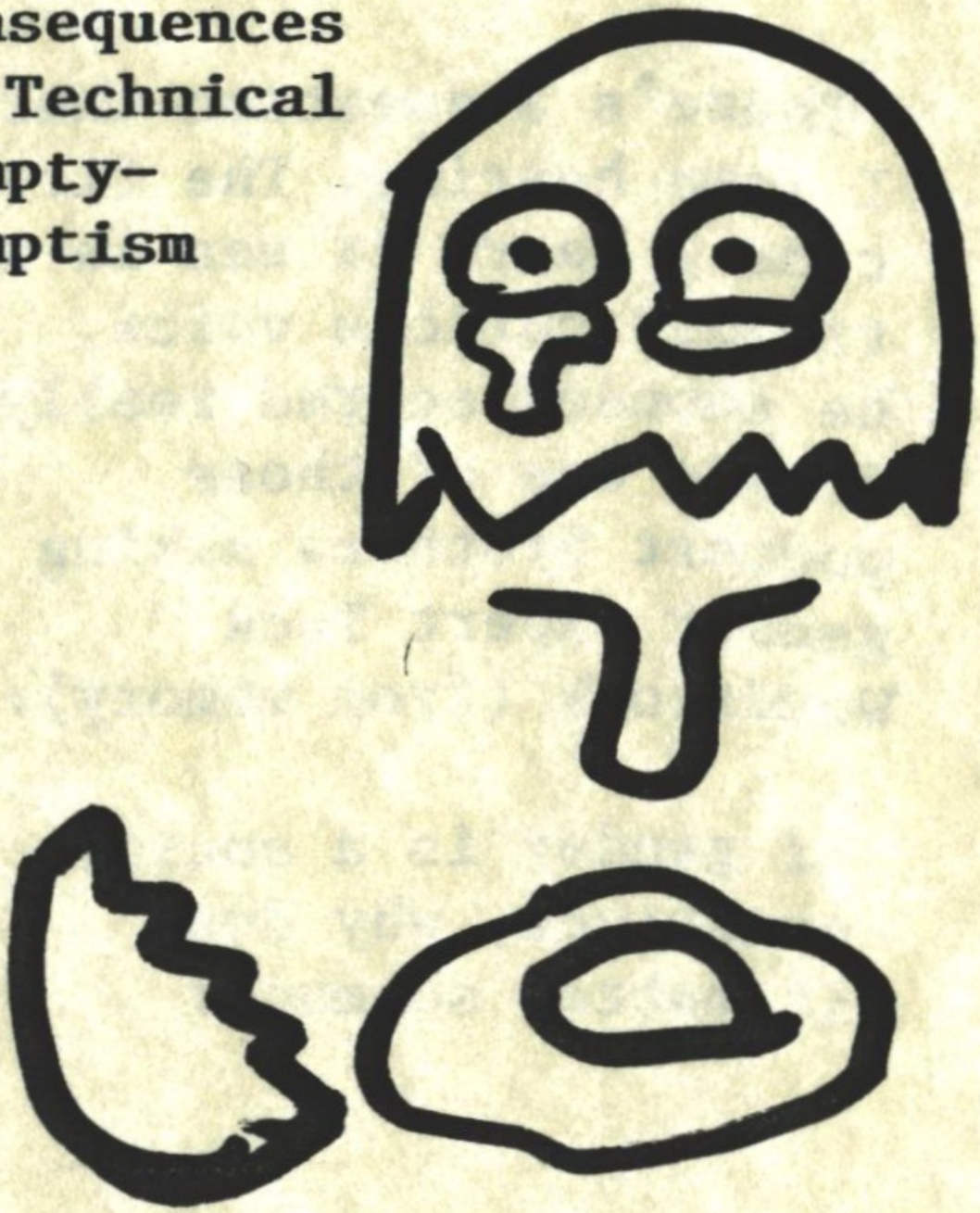
Ladyfinger #109

The Personal Consequences of Technical Humpty-Dumptism



Morgan Stern

1. Everything is Socially Constructed

There's a question that I keep hearing. The first time I heard it was in a timidly curious voice, he sounded scared really, it was one of those podcast brothers asking gender expert Tuck Woodstock (from memory):

If gender is a social construct, why does it matter so much?

2. Nobody:

And then now, lately,
in my scrollings, I feel
like I'm hearing this
question every other day.

And the faith attached to
the asking feels less and
less good.

Then there's another--
have you heard the phrase
"performative femininity"?
I think that's a Judith
Butler phrase. I haven't
read any Butler. But I
heard the term long ago
and held it inside,
where... where it hurt,
I guess.

3. Academics:

Spot the problem yet?
If you ask someone who reads theory, they'll tell you "That's not what that means; socially constructed is a technical phrase, and performative is a technical word."

But you can't do that!
The meaning of words lies in the hearts of the many, not the educated few.

If your idea is ~~good~~ catchy enough to escape academic containment, watch out.
The masses will detechnify your special words.

4. Humpty Dumpty:

"When I use a word,"
Humpty Dumpty said
in a rather scornful
tone, "it means just
what I choose it to
mean, neither more
nor less."

This doesn't work when academics do it, either.

Scholars, if you need a name for a new idea, make up a new word! Common vocabulary will retain common meaning.

5. Furtherly,

Another thing!

When you tell
someone something
is not so,
their belief is
not inverted.

(Beliefs can't be turned
around by negating.
They can only be
replaced.)

So when I read the theory,
or--okay--summaries of them,
it doesn't work.
Socially constructed,
performance: I still hear
Fakery, phonery, fuckery.

6. Authenticity

It makes a person conflicted!
How am I supposed to take off
the mask over my autism, while
making up a new mask that
performs Woman? I was raised
in the authenticity wars.
I'm supposed to be killing
the cop in my head,
I'm supposed to be stimming
my internal family system,
I'm supposed to be losing
my inner child's virginity,
or something, I can't
remember, it's all so
complicated!
When do I get to stop,
and breathe, and sweat,
and come, and lie
in a meadow clearing?

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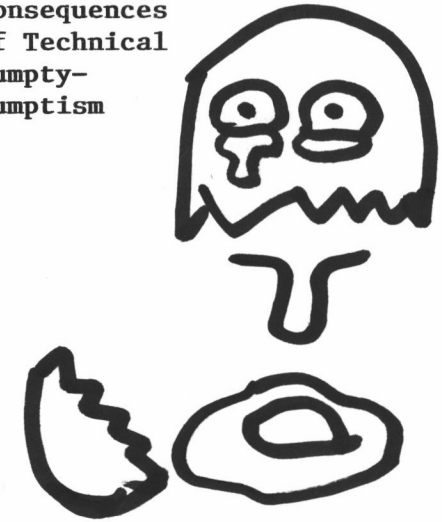

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